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LETTER DATED 27 FEBRUARY 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you the text of a letter from Chief Tom Ikimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, concerning the Bakassi Peninsula.

(Signed) Ibrahim A. GAMBARI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 26 February 1996 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria addressed to the President of the Security Council

My attention has been drawn to the letter dated 22 February 1996 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/125) concerning the Bakassi Peninsula. In that letter, the Cameroonian Foreign Minister alleged, inter alia, that Nigerian troops have been launching artillery attacks on Cameroonian positions and advancing further into Cameroonian territory since 3 February 1996.

I have the honour, on instructions from the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to inform the Council that the allegations of the Cameroonian authorities are unfounded. Furthermore, these allegations seem intended to mislead the esteemed Council in particular, and the international community in general, on the true state of affairs prevailing in the Bakassi Peninsula.

It is not the purpose here to use the opportunity of this letter to provide the genesis of the present controversy over the Bakassi Peninsula for, as the Council is well aware, this matter is already before the International Court of Justice. However, I should like to take this opportunity to make the following two points: firstly, that the Bakassi Peninsula has historically been Nigerian territory, and well over 95 per cent of the inhabitants of the Peninsula are Nigerians; and secondly, that it is the Cameroonians who have always instigated attacks on the Nigerian population in the Bakassi, the latest of which occurred on 3 February 1996. On that occasion, some elements of the Cameroon military forces shelled the Nigerian positions in the Bakassi Peninsula continuously for four hours before the Nigerian soldiers responded in self-defence. Though the Cameroonian attacks ceased thereafter and normalcy returned, the incident resulted in considerable destruction of lives and property. Some of the casualties were civilians.

In spite of Cameroon's persistent hostilities in the Bakassi, the Government of Nigeria continues to believe that the best option for resolving the dispute with Cameroon is through dialogue and peaceful negotiations. This is consistent with the policy of good-neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence to which Nigeria has always adhered. Hence, on Friday, 16 February 1996, I met with the Foreign Minister of Cameroon in Kara, Togo, under the auspices of President Eyadema and we both signed a communiqué on behalf of our two Governments in which we agreed to stop hostilities in the Bakassi.

I wish to confirm that since the historic meeting in Kara, the Nigerian Government troops have made no attacks whatsoever on the Cameroonian positions in the Bakassi, as claimed by the Cameroonian Foreign Minister in the letter under reference and no Nigerian soldier occupies any land that is not Nigeria's. On the contrary, it is the Nigerian population in the Bakassi that have continued to be the victims of intimidation, harassment and attacks by

Cameroonian soldiers. Cameroonian helicopter gunships have been invading the area and firing at Nigerian positions.

What has become obvious is that the Cameroonians have embarked on a course of propaganda against Nigeria in order to bring undue pressure to bear on our Government. It would appear also that their tactics seem aimed at forcing a decision on the Peninsula question in their favour, regardless of ongoing peaceful negotiations and processes at the International Court of Justice. These events have cast serious doubts on the sincerity of the Cameroonian authorities and called into question their faith in such negotiations as have been ongoing in Kara and in other forums.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria takes this opportunity to urge the Security Council and the international community to prevail on the Cameroonians to maintain peace in the Bakassi and do nothing to further jeopardize stability in the area.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Chief Tom IKIMI
Honourable Minister for
Foreign Affairs